

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Midwifery Services Increases
Committee of the Whole—2019-2020 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Health and Social Services—February 26, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Our friends advised that this is where midwifery services are to be found. There are additional resources in here. Maybe if you could have somebody remind me of that and with a brief description of what the resources are going to be used towards? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a number of increases in this area. It's not all midwifery services. Some of it is some additional positions in intensive care, long-term care, and medical-surgical nursing to help implement Stanton and a few other things. There is \$373,000 in here for midwifery program expansion, to help us move forward with the territorial midwifery program. It's a couple of different midwifery positions in Yellowknife and Hay River. Maybe I will go to the deputy minister, who can go through in greater detail exactly where those investments are to help us move forward with the territorial midwifery program.

Before we do that, just one quick note. When we made those changes around CFS that we talked about earlier, there was a half-time position which was a midwifery consultant that was vacant, that we took those dollars to roll into the CFS position. That's not in this area. That position was actually in the admin section, which was the first page we reviewed today. That reduction occurred there. It's not actually part of the midwifery program. It was a consultant position, half-time, vacant. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. COOPER: This year's budget includes \$373,000 for three positions. One of them is a midwifery clinical specialist in Yellowknife. That's one FT. We have a midwife position, a three-quarter FT, for Yellowknife as well, and a three-quarter for Hay River. When you combine the total investments, our funding will be \$1.789 million for midwifery. We're going to move, this year, to have a program that has, with the successful passing of this budget, 8.5 full-time equivalent midwives in the Northwest Territories, which will turn this program into one of the most robust midwife programs in the country, when you consider that Saskatchewan has, for their whole province, 15, and all of the Maritime provinces combined have 13.

With the addition of these resources this year, we are going to have the potential for a very strong program for women, and not just for maternity care, but also, using the model that we are rolling out, it is going to be an approach that will build capacity in other positions in communities to support perinatal care and education. This is really the movement to a hub-and-spoke model. This will be part of a multi-year plan where we will have made significant progress on implementing the Midwives Stakeholder Report by the end of this term, with a little bit more to do in 2021.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Cooper. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. The deputy minister writes a pretty good Minister's

statement there. That is excellent. All good news.

More seriously, though, it would be helpful to get this out, because I think it is a good news story, and the Minister knows that I have been bugging him about this for at least three years, as long as I have been here. It is a good news story, and I do appreciate the work of the department and his staff to move this forward.

This is a great investment of money and will have long-term payoffs, all the way down to those kids who will become productive adults in our society. I appreciate the Minister and his work on this, and I thank him very much. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was waiting, and I am still waiting for the "but." However, I appreciate the Member's comments.

This really goes to the question that the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh asked earlier about early childhood development and the types of things that we are doing. This is one of those areas where, with the pre- and the postnatal services that these people provide, what we can do at a territorial level can really, I think, make some profound benefits and impacts on residents across the territory.

We look forward to seeing this roll out over a number of years and become a strong program, even though, frankly, we are better than some at this point, but there is a lot of room for improvements.